

## **BOBCAT STATUS IN IOWA 2001**

Prior to settlement, bobcats were found throughout Iowa. Historically they were the most abundant of Iowa's three native cat species - the bobcat, lynx and mountain lion. By the late 1800's historical records mention little of bobcats in Iowa.

In the 1930's and 1940's small numbers of bobcats were reported from all corners of Iowa, although they were most numerous in the northeast corner of the state. Between the 1940's and mid-1980's bobcats were infrequent in the western, southern and eastern portions of Iowa.

During the past decade and a half a number of bobcat sightings, roadkills, and occasional trap captures have occurred. In 1999, Pat Schlarbaum, DNR Wildlife Diversity Technician, mailed out an informal questionnaire to County Conservation Boards across the state.

In early 2001 a second, more detailed questionnaire, was sent to a larger sample of outdoor professionals. Figure 13.1 shows that 62 counties now have bobcats present within their boundaries. Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri show similar bobcat expansion and increases near Iowa's southern and western borders.

Dr. Larkin Powell, Biology professor at the University of Dubuque, has been working with an Honor's student to develop a bobcat habitat model for Iowa.

Dr. Jim Pease, Extension Wildlife Specialist at Iowa State University, is also working with M.S. student, Anne Avery, on a more elaborate survey of bobcat sightings and the public's perception of predators in the state. That project is scheduled for completion in 2003.

The Iowa DNR is currently working on a process to delist the bobcat from threatened status.

Reproductive and population age structure data will be collected from all bobcat carcasses obtained and we will continue to monitor the increase and modern day expansion of bobcats in Iowa.

The Iowa DNR is currently developing a research study to monitor bobcat movements and habitat use in south-central Iowa. A small sample of bobcats will be captured and neck collared with GPS and standard radio tracking devices during the fall and winter of 2002-2003. After evaluating the success of this effort, the project will be expanded, over the next few years, to with the hope of obtaining enough data to delist the bobcat from Iowa's threatened list. Once the bobcat is delisted, consideration will also be given to implement very conservative, regulated harvest in portions of the state. I would project that a harvest season would not occur before 2006 at the earliest.



## MOUNTAIN LION STATUS IN IOWA 2000 – 2002

The mountain lion (or puma, panther, and various other names) is the largest of the three wildcats documented in Iowa. They probably occurred throughout the state, but nowhere in great numbers. The last historical record of a mountain lion in Iowa appears to be near Cincinnati, in Appanoose County, where one was shot in 1867.

Since the mid-1990's the DNR has received several reports of large "cat" like sightings that lead us to believe that "free ranging" mountain lions may be occurring in some portions the state. These "free ranging" mountain lions could be either escapees, or released animals, under private ownership or animals moving in from western and southern states. **THE IOWA DNR HAS NOT 'STOCKED' OR INTRODUCED MOUNTAIN LIONS IN THE STATE.** Southeast South Dakota, eastern Nebraska, northeast Kansas, and northern Missouri have reported increasing mountain lion sightings during the past 5 years.

Figure 1 is a map showing reported observations that appear to be credible, confirmed mountain lion tracks, a visual sighting, and a roadkill near Harlan, which could possibly indicate that a wild mountain lion has roamed into the state. The roadkilled animal in Jasper County was not reported to the DNR until after the roadkill near Harlan. This animal was exhumed and a close inspection of the remains showed the animal had been declawed, indicating that it must have been a captive animal at one time. The confirmed sighting in Ringgold County was observed by DNR personnel, and

mountain lion scat was collected at that observation site. We have several instances of deer hunters seeing partially eaten deer covered by grass and other debris. This is somewhat typical of how mountain lions cache their prey but some bobcats will similarly cover their prey.

Currently the mountain lion has no legal status in the Iowa Code thus they are not given any sort of protection by Iowa law. The DNR requested that the 2002 legislative session consider legislation to designate the mountain lion as a furbearer, thus allowing the DNR to properly manage this species should their numbers increase. It was also requested that indiscriminate killing of these animals should not be allowed unless they are about to cause damage or injury to property or persons. The legislation passed the Senate with little controversy, knowing full well that the House would not even consider the issue.

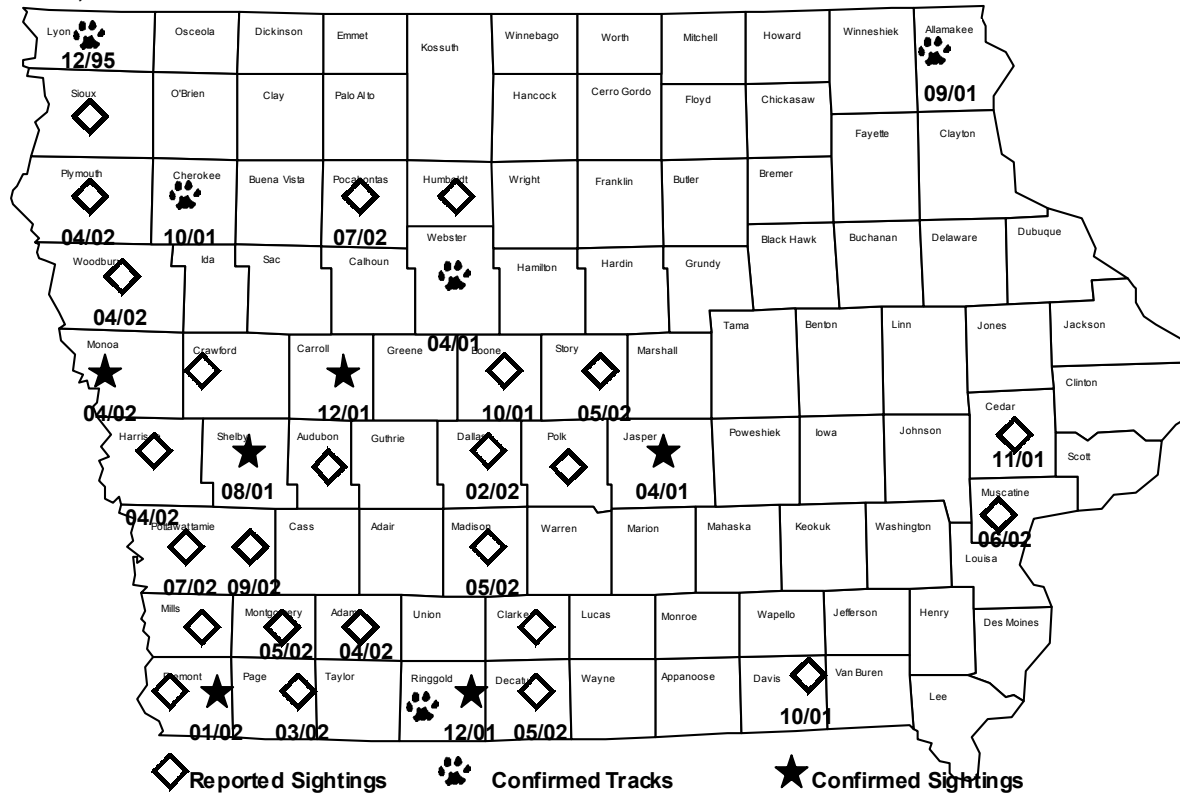
Professor James Mahaffy of Dordt College has created a website (<http://defender5.dordt.edu/~mahaffy/mtlion/mtlionshort.htm>) listing mountain lion sightings in Northwest Iowa. He has recorded several sightings along the Big Sioux and Doon Rivers and into the eastern edge of South Dakota. Numerous other mountain lion sightings have been generated from these reports. We attempted to map only those most credible reports. However, since the spring of 2002, we have received so many reports, which agency personnel and others believe to be credible, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to sort out which reports are reliable. Although

the DNR does not advocate indiscriminate killing of mountain lion, another roadkill or a shooting would help add credibility and confidence to all the mountain lion sightings that we are currently receiving.

It is very difficult to validate authentic livestock losses or injury. We have had reports of horses with claw

marks (scratches) on the hind flank and a few reports of sheep that some property owner believes were taken by mountain lions. However, mountain lion researchers believe that white-tailed deer and other wild animals are the preferred prey. We will continue to monitor and attempt to sort and map reliable sightings.

Figure 17.1 Sightings and credible reports of free ranging Mountain Lions in Iowa, 2000-Present.



## BLACK BEAR STATUS IN IOWA

Black bears were one of the most recognizable and noticeable mammals encountered by Europeans as they settled North America. As settlers moved west, they generally killed any bears they encountered. Thus, bear numbers declined rapidly in many areas, and bears disappeared from much of their former range. Most present-day Iowans probably associate black bears with some of our large national parks and do not realize that they once occurred in Iowa. When the settlers reached Iowa, they found them widespread throughout the state but higher numbers occurred where there were more woodlands. Bears were killed because they would damage crops and harass and kill livestock and because they were valuable both as food and for their hide. Several stories of the exploits of early-day “Davy Crocketts” in Iowa have been recorded in journals and diaries.

There are pre-1900 records of black bears from forty-eight Iowa counties, two-thirds of them from counties in the eastern half of Iowa. The

last recorded bear in the 1800s was one found near Spirit Lake in 1876. In the 1960s, black bear reports begin to reoccur in the state. Several of these reports were from captive bears that were either turned loose or escapees. In the 1990s to the present we began to field more reports of what appeared to be wild free ranging bears in the state. Currently, the nearest established wild populations of black bears are in northern Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, and southern Missouri. These populations are moving towards Iowa from both directions. Figure 18.1 shows the most recent sightings of bears in Iowa. Black bear sightings are usually more reliable than Mountain lion sightings because they do not necessarily flee when sighted, the tracks are very distinct, and they are not readily mistaken for other animals.

Much of the historical information in this report was paraphrased from Dr. James J. Dinsmore’s book “A Country So Full Of Game—The Story Of Wildlife in Iowa”.

Figure 18.1 Sightings and evidence of Black bear in Iowa.

